

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 03946

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINS, SCUL, UR
SUBJECT: AVANT-GARDE ART EXHIBIT OPENS

REF: MOSCOW 3537

SUMMARY: AVANT-GARDE EXHIBIT OPENED MARCH 7 TO SUBSTANTIAL CROWDS. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME CENSORSHIP BUT RELIGIOUS THEMES AND SURREALISTIC TECHNIQUES, WHICH REPORTEDLY HAD CONCERNED AUTHORITIES, ABOUNDED. A CONCURRENT UNOFFICIAL EXHIBIT WITH POLITICAL OVERTONES IS REPORTEDLY UNDERWAY AT HOME OF ARTIST NADEZHDA ELSKAVA. END SUMMARY.

1. EXHIBIT DISCUSSED REFTTEL, OPENING OF WHICH WAS POST-PONED BECAUSE OF DISPUTE OVER CONTENT OF SOME OF PAINTINGS, OPENED MARCH 7. SEVERAL MILITIA WERE PRESENT TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN LINE OF ABOUT FIFTY PEOPLE OUTSIDE EXHIBIT HALL. EXHIBIT ROOMS WERE CROWDED WITH SPECTATORS AND WESTERN JOURNALISTS, SOME OF WHOM WERE FILMING ON-THE-SPOT COVERAGE.

2. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY ARTIST SOURCES, ABOUT TWENTY
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WORKS WERE NOT HUNG OF THE EIGHTY SUBMITTED. EXHIBIT HALL DIRECTORS ARGUED THAT THERE SIMPLY WAS NOT SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR THE ADDITIONAL PICTURES. (COMMENT. FROM WHAT EMBOFFS COULD SEE, THIS WAS NOT AN IMPLAUSIBLE ARGUMENT. MANY OF CANVASSES ON EXHIBIT WERE LARGE AND SPACE WAS AT A PREMIUM. NO DOUBT THE CANVASSES COULD HAVE BEEN HUNG EVEN CLOSER TOGETHER, BUT POSSIBLY AT SOME

AESTHETIC COST.) AT LEAST SOME ARTISTS FOUND THESE ARGUMENTS SPECIOUS. EMBOFFS OVERHEARD LINITSKY, WHOSE CANVASSES FILLED ONE ROOM OF THE EXHIBIT, TELLING WESTERN JOURNALISTS THAT FIVE OF HIS WORKS HAD BEEN REFUSED BY CENSORS. IF CENSORSHIP WAS EXERCISED, HOWEVER, IT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN LIMITED. THERE WERE MANY CANVASSES ON RELIGIOUS THEMES (ALTHOUGH NOT ALWAYS TREATED POSITIVELY), A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF NUDES, SURREALISTIC TECHNIQUES AND SOME POWERFULLY NEGATIVE EVOCATIONS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.

3. A CONCURRENT UNOFFICIAL EXHIBIT, ENTITLED "WAITING" AND COMPRISING ABOUT FORTY PICTURES BY ELEVEN ARTISTS FROM VARIOUS SOVIET CITIES IS BEING HELD AT APARTMENT OF NADEZHDA ELSKAVA, A FEMALE PAINTER WHO IS CLOSE TO RABIN AND UIBLITSKY. SOME OR ALL OF THESE ARTISTS WISH TO EMIGRATE AND WERE REPORTEDLY OFFERED EXIT PERMISSION IF THEY DID NOT HOLD EXHIBIT. ARTISTS DO NOT BELIEVE IN TRUTH OF THIS OFFER, BUT AGREED TO POSTPONE "OPENING" UNTIL MARCH 19. ELSKAYA WAS AT GRAPHIC ARTS COMMITTEE EXHIBIT OPENING (WITH KIBLITSKY) TELLING HER STORY TO WESTERN PRESS, INCLUDING FACT THAT ARTISTS EXHIBITING IN HER APARTMENT INTEND TO USE PROCEEDS FROM ANY SALES AT EXHIBIT TO ESTABLISH A FUND TO HELP ARTISTS AND FAMILIES OF ARTISTS IMPRISONED BY REGIME. ELSKAVA SAYS HER APARTMENT IS PRESENTLY "UNDER ARREST" (I.E. HAS SOVIET MILITIA OR

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KGB POSTED OUTSIDE).

4. WE WILL REPORT BY AIRGRAM FURTHER IMPRESSIONS OF GRAPHIC ARTS COMMITTEE EXHIBIT AND ELSKAYA'S UNOFFICIAL EXHIBIT (PROVIDED WE ARE ABLE TO SEE IT) AND ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WE ARE ABLE TO OBTAIN ABOUT POLITICAL MANUEVERING INVOLVED IN BOTH EXHIBITS. TOON

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